

Section A-2

Family Readiness Groups (FRG)

The contents of this Toolkit have been developed to assist you in your efforts to support family readiness. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. However, because statutory and regulatory changes may have occurred since the publication of this Toolkit, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs cannot assume responsibility for its continued accuracy. Before taking any significant action based on the contents of this Toolkit, you should contact a subject matter expert in your chain of command to secure the most current information.

Family Readiness Groups (FRG)

Volunteer Management – Recognition

The need for recognition cannot be overstated. No one volunteers for the recognition, they volunteer because they care. However, appropriate recognition of volunteers and their contributions pays huge dividends for both the individual and the unit. Remember that they are volunteers, and they could be spending their time in other ways. Instead they are contributing to the FRG. To be most effective, appreciation must be personal. Hand written notes and phone calls are always welcomed. However you communicate, the three important points to make are: **thank you, you've made a difference, and the unit and our families need your continued support.** Volunteers also receive great satisfaction from seeing the results of their efforts. Letting them know the results of their efforts and keeping them informed of FRG plans and success provides additional motivation to continue their good work.

While expressions of personal appreciation are essential, more public recognition can provide increased emphasis and help to foster volunteerism in the unit. Recognition for volunteers can take many forms and should be given to volunteers not only as a thank you for their effort, but to recognize individual commitment to the unit and community they serve. Many individuals are unaware of the volunteer opportunities that are available to them. Recognizing the efforts of others may generate interest on the part of prospective volunteers. Most units hold periodic events to honor volunteers such as volunteer appreciation lunches and ceremonies.

The most successful volunteer programs and those with the highest retention are programs that reflect recognition at all levels. Many units have developed specific Certificates of Appreciation and awards that may be given to volunteers. Most of the service headquarters have various levels of awards in accordance with the level of responsibility of the volunteers. The unit must submit an application for these awards well in advance, noting the volunteer's job position, contributions, and effect of their participation on the unit and community. Types of recognition may include but are not limited to:

- Letters or Certificates of Appreciation from the commander
- Certificates of Recognition using the unit logo
- Volunteer of the Month
- Volunteer of the Quarter
- Volunteer of the Year
- Less formal forms of recognition may include a plaque, and recognition among peers within the FRG

Recognition should be an integral part of volunteer management. Appropriate recognition of volunteers takes advance planning and time. Nominating a volunteer for an award is a very

special form of recognition and a valuable tool for communicating information about the work of the family readiness group. For any volunteer recognition awards or ceremony, it is smart to arrange for a photographer and/or media. The photos will provide memories for the individual and can be used in a unit newsletter or local media publication. Make this the special occasion that it deserves to be.

Make volunteer recognition an ongoing effort. Involve your unit and FRG in determining which awards seem the most appropriate. To be fair and objective, set criteria for determining who should be nominated for awards. Inform all members of the unit and FRG about the criteria for awards and stick to the criteria. Use your unit newsletter to discuss and publicize volunteer awards and recognition.

When should you present awards? It is wise to schedule a quarterly awards recognition event for the unit. That sets a time schedule to nominate individuals, and increases the possibility that volunteers will be recognized regularly. Nothing is more discouraging than to be recognized for volunteer efforts you may have contributed for a specific event (i.e. planning Family Day) many months after the event is over. If possible, recognize volunteers at the time of the event (in front of the FRG and unit) or shortly thereafter. Recognize volunteers in action not after the fact.

When preparing the nomination for a volunteer award, know the award's purpose and specific criteria. Is the nominee eligible? Use clear, direct, action words and describe their responsibilities and effect on the family readiness group. Organize your thoughts and edit them. Always type the nomination and supporting documentation. Keep it simple, clear, and easy to read. Many nomination forms require information about the program. Provide information about the unique features of the program, its history, and the number of volunteer hours. The nominator must demonstrate that the volunteer nominee has made a significant contribution to the organization. Use active phrases such as "developed training for key callers..." and make sure that all acronyms are defined.

To keep the unit and FRG alive and well takes care and nurturing; not just for the individuals but for the group itself. Caring must strengthen commitment into action if we are to preserve and retain one of the greatest assets we have - volunteers.